

Public Counsel (Ombudsman's Office)

An Office for Resolving Citizen Complaints

At this time, in light of COVID-19, we are no longer taking walk-ins.

Julie L. Rogers, Ombudsman

The Office of the Public Counsel (also known as the State Ombudsman's Office) is an independent complaint-handling office for the use of citizens who have complaints about the actions of administrative agencies of state government, that is, the bureaucracy of state government.

By investigating and resolving citizens' complaints relating to the actions of state administrative agencies, the Ombudsman's Office seeks not only to provide administrative justice to citizens who have been wronged by state agencies, but also to promote accountability in public administration. Because the Ombudsman's Office is independent of the agencies that it investigates, it can be impartial in disputes between administrative agencies and citizens, and can promote reasonable and informal resolution of citizen grievances. This activity not only improves the relationship between citizens and their government, but it can also play an important role in holding powerful agencies accountable for their actions.

In 2012, the Legislature created the Office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare within the Ombudsman's Office. The office is authorized to investigate allegations of possible misconduct death or serious injury in foster homes, private agencies, childcare facilities and programs. It is also responsible for reviewing the role and effectiveness of the state's youth rehabilitation and treatment centers.

Jennifer A. Carter, Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) provides an independent form of inquiry and review of the actions of individuals and agencies responsible for the care and protection of children in the Nebraska Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation systems. The OIG is a subdivision of the Office of Public Counsel (Ombudsman's Office).

The office investigates allegations or incidents of misconduct, misfeasance, malfeasance, statutory violations, and regulatory violations committed by any of the following:

- Department of Health and Human Services;
- Juvenile Probation;
- The Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice's Juvenile Justice Programs;
- Persons and entities in the child welfare and juvenile justice system under state contract;
- Private agencies and child welfare service providers;
- Licensed child care facilities;
- Foster parents; and
- Juvenile detention and staff secure detention centers.

The OIG also investigates incidents resulting in death or serious injury that occur in foster homes, private agencies, child care facilities, or other programs under contract with the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as cases involving an investigation under the Child Protection Act open for

no more than one year. The OIG identifies systemic issues and makes recommendations for improvement.

Doug Koebernick, Inspector General of the Nebraska Correctional System

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) of the Nebraska Correctional System was established in 2015 by the Nebraska Legislature in order to provide for increased accountability and oversight of the Nebraska correctional system. The office is a subdivision of the Office of Public Counsel.

The OIG identifies and examines systemic issues of the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services and also investigates incidents resulting in death or serious injury that occur within the Nebraska correctional system.

The OIG issues an annual report with their findings and recommendations. The report is due on September 15th.